

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1 (Currently Amended): A thrust needle roller bearing having a washer formed of a thin steel plate and a needle roller, wherein at least said washer has a nitrogen enriched layer at a surface layer portion, an average amount of retained austenite in said surface layer portion is at least [[5]] 8.2 volume % and at most [[25]] 22.0 volume %, and austenite grain size number defined by Japanese Industrial Standard of said surface layer portion is 11 or higher.

2 (Previously Presented): The thrust needle roller bearing according to claim 1, wherein nitrogen content of said surface layer portion is in the range of 0.1 mass % to 0.7 mass %.

3 (Currently Amended): A support structure receiving thrust load of a compressor for a car air-conditioner in which a swash plate rotates as a main shaft rotates and a piston swings accordingly, including

a thrust needle roller bearing receiving thrust load generated by the rotation of said swash plate, having a washer formed of a thin steel plate and a needle roller, wherein at least said washer has a nitrogen enriched layer at a surface layer portion, an average amount of retained austenite in said surface layer portion is at least [[5]] 8.2 volume % and at most [[25]] 22.0 volume %, and austenite grain size number defined by Japanese Industrial Standard of said surface layer portion is 11 or higher.

4 (Previously Presented): The support structure receiving thrust load of a compressor for a car air-conditioner according to claim 3, wherein nitrogen content of said surface layer portion is in the range of 0.1 mass % to 0.7 mass %.

5 (Currently Amended): A support structure receiving thrust load of an automatic transmission including a torque converter having an impeller and a turbine opposite to each other with a stator in between, comprising

a thrust needle roller bearing having a washer formed of a thin steel plate and a needle roller, at least between said stator and said impeller or between said stator and said turbine, wherein

at least said washer has a nitrogen enriched layer at a surface layer portion, an average amount of retained austenite in said surface layer portion is at least [[5]] 8.2 volume % and at most [[25]] 22.0 volume %, and austenite grain size number defined by Japanese Industrial Standard of said surface layer portion is 11 or higher.

6 (Previously Presented): The support structure receiving thrust load of an automatic transmission according to claim 5, wherein nitrogen content of said surface layer portion is in the range of 0.1 mass % to 0.7 mass %.

7 (Currently Amended): A support structure for a continuously variable transmission in which rotation of an input shaft is changed in a nonstep manner and transmitted to an output shaft, including

a thrust needle roller bearing receiving thrust load generated by the rotation either of said input shaft or said output shaft, having a washer formed of a thin steel plate and a needle roller, wherein at least said washer has a nitrogen enriched layer at a surface layer portion, an average amount of retained austenite in said surface layer portion is at least [[5]] 8.2 volume % and at most [[25]] 22.0 volume %, and austenite grain size number defined by Japanese Industrial Standard of said surface layer portion is 11 or higher.

8 (Previously Presented): The support structure for a continuously variable transmission according to claim 7, wherein nitrogen content of said surface layer portion is in the range of 0.1 mass % to 0.7 mass %.

9 (Currently Amended): A support structure receiving thrust load of a manual transmission allowing, by engagement between a gear of an input shaft and a gear of a counter shaft and engagement between a gear of the counter shaft and a gear of an output shaft, stepwise change of speed of rotation of said output shaft from the speed of rotation of said input shaft, including

a thrust needle roller bearing receiving thrust load of any of said input shaft, said counter shaft and said output shaft, having a washer formed of a thin steel plate and a needle roller, wherein at least said washer has a nitrogen enriched layer at a surface layer portion, an average amount of retained austenite in said surface layer portion is at least [[5]] 8.2 volume % and at most [[25]] 22.0 volume %, and austenite grain size number defined by Japanese Industrial Standard of said surface layer portion is 11 or higher.

10 (Previously Presented): The support structure receiving thrust load of a manual transmission according to claim 9, wherein nitrogen content of said surface layer portion is in the range of 0.1 mass % to 0.7 mass %.